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Assessment by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of phase one of the reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution 2363 (2017), supported a two-phase reconfiguration of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in line with the special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General (S/2017/437), and requested us to provide, in consultation with UNAMID, a written assessment by 1 January 2018 of phase one of the reconfiguration (1 July-31 December 2017). In line with paragraph 6 of the resolution, the assessment includes an account of the progress in implementing phase one, the impact of reductions in the mission's presence on the areas from which UNAMID has withdrawn, of the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with UNAMID in ensuring unfettered freedom of movement and removing bureaucratic hindrances, and finally, of whether conditions on the ground remain conducive to further reductions in phase two (31 January-30 June 2018).

2. A joint African Union-United Nations assessment team visited Khartoum and Darfur from 7 to 17 November 2017. It was co-led by the African Union Liaison Office in the Sudan and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and comprised representatives of the African Union Commission, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, as well as of the United Nations Development Programme and the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Darfur, representing, respectively, the United Nations country team and the humanitarian country team. The assessment team held consultations with Government of the Sudan officials and the United Nations country team, visited four Darfur states and the majority of the closed team sites, and met state and local authorities, representatives of the communities of internally displaced persons, and the native administration.

3. The assessment report covers the period from 1 July to 22 December 2017 and provides a conflict analysis, which depicts the current conflict dynamics and drivers in Darfur, as well as the political and humanitarian situation. It assesses the situation in line with the requirements of paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 2363 (2017) and makes recommendations for phase two of the mission's reconfiguration.

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II. Conflict analysis

4. The trends indicated in the special report (S/2017/437) continue as, following its military victory against the rebel movements, the Government of the Sudan is firmly consolidating its control and State authority across Darfur, except for small pockets in the Jebel Marra area. Notably, the deployment of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Darfur in the context of the weapons collection campaign has increased the Government's capability to respond swiftly to security challenges, while creating new dynamics. On the political front, the constitutional review process continues in a measured way on the basis of the outcome of the national dialogue. However, the people of Darfur have not yet fully benefited from the political and the legislative provisions stipulated in the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur as its implementation remains lacking, despite the inclusion of the Doha Document in the Constitution.

A. Conflict dynamics

Fighting between the Government of the Sudan and armed groups

5. No major confrontations have been reported between the Government of the Sudan and Darfur rebel groups since 1 July. The incursion of Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and Sudan Liberation Movement/Transitional Council (SLM/TC), a splinter faction of Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW), from Libya and South Sudan into North and East Darfur, in late May and early June 2017, did not result in any sustained presence in Darfur. According to UNAMID, reported clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces/Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and a suspected dormant cell of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Birkat Saira area, 25 km east of Saraf Omra, on 22 November in the context of the weapons collection campaign, resulted in the capture of 16 rebels and the disbanding of some 130 JEM elements. Clashes were also reported at Mijelid village, 46 km north-east of Shaeria, on 29 November between Government armed forces and an unidentified armed group suspected of coming from South Sudan, without any reported casualties. Neither SLA/MM nor the Gibril Ibrahim faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM/Gibril) have a significant armed presence in Darfur or the Sudan.

6. The area of operations of SLA/AW in Darfur continues to be limited to pockets of Jebel Marra and its effectiveness is reduced by further fragmentations, infighting or involvement in acts of banditry. The areas under the control of SLA/AW and Government armed forces have not changed since the special report was published. No engagement has been reported between Government armed forces and SLA/AW since the clashes of 10 June in the village of Thur, 15 km south of Nertiti, triggered by an alleged theft of livestock belonging to the Nawaybah clan of Northern Rizeigat by SLA/AW. On 21 October, clashes were recorded between SLA/AW elements loyal to the movement and a splinter group, in Feina village, northeast of Kass, which was the fifth incident of this nature since April 2017. Furthermore, in early November, SLA/AW elements stole Ereigat/Rizeigat cattle, creating tensions in the area around Thur, and on 22 November, suspected SLA/AW elements fired at a commercial truck near Golo, Central Darfur, killing one civilian and injuring six civilians.

7. While there is no agreement on a permanent ceasefire, the Government and the armed groups continue to extend temporary cessations of hostilities. In October, the Government extended its unilateral cessation of hostilities until 31 December 2017. In a joint declaration on 30 November, SLA/MM, JEM/Gibril and SLM/TC extended their unilateral cessation of hostilities for two months, from 30 November 2017 to 31 January 2018.

8. Conflicts in the neighbouring countries continue to provide an opportunity for some of the rebel groups that have lost their foothold in Darfur to retreat, resupply and train. SLA/MM is currently estimated to maintain several hundred fighters, with some 150 vehicles, in Libya, where they are engaged in mercenary activities, while a few hundred JEM fighters with some 60 to 80 vehicles are still located in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan. In the incursion during May and June 2017, the rebel groups who infiltrated from Libya used heavy weapons, including armoured vehicles, for the first time.

9. Rapid Support Force units continue to monitor the northern borders of Darfur, while the joint Sudan-Chad border monitoring force has been effective in creating stability in the western border areas. No progress has been made to date towards establishing similar arrangements to cover the Darfur-Central African Republic border. However, following a meeting in Khartoum on 1 and 2 November 2017, the President of the Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir and the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, undertook not to harbour or to provide support to their respective countries' rebel movements, and decided to reactivate the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and its associated sub-mechanisms, including the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, which is part of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

Militia groups, weapons collection campaign and impact on security

10. In the Government's efforts to consolidate control and to expand its authority across Darfur, two factors are playing a key role, both contributing to new dynamics as regards security, namely, the deployment of a sizeable contingent of RSF and the conduct of a weapons collection campaign. The former has de facto put in motion a consolidation process of the militia groups under the umbrella of RSF, while the latter is reportedly creating conditions to further improve security in Darfur beyond the state capitals, while reshaping the political landscape. Despite the overall decrease in the number of acts of banditry and criminality, the police force and the rule of law institutions have limited capacity in remote locations and areas of return for the internally displaced communities.

11. The recent deployment of RSF to Darfur in the context of the weapons collection campaign has initiated a process of bringing the different militia groups under its effective control and authority. Although total figures of deployment are not made public, except for the announced arrival of 10,000 RSF in North Darfur, UNAMID estimates that some 18,000 RSF have been deployed across the five Darfur states. Given past RSF involvement in counter-insurgency operations and reports of arbitrary arrests, harassment and rape associated with its elements, as well as the fact that most of its units are recruited from the Arab Rizeigat tribe, several communities of internally displaced persons remain apprehensive regarding its presence and intentions.

12. In the past three months, RSF has increasingly asserted itself as an undisputed security force in Darfur, particularly through its central role in the weapons collection campaign. On 23 October, RSF pursued the Savanna militia group out of Kutum town in North Darfur, and on 30 October, clashed with them in Shaeria in East Darfur. On 10 November, after clashes in the west of Korma town, they captured the leader of the group, Abdallah Rizkallah, along with nine other members. Likewise, following the public refusal of Musa Hilal to integrate his border guard units with RSF in August, clashes took place on 21 September on the Sudan-Egypt-Libya border between RSF and the border guards, which resulted in the killing of 17 of the border guard elements, who were accused of human trafficking and illegal migration, as well as two RSF troops. On 26 November, RSF units were reportedly ambushed by Musa Hilal border guards while transporting some criminal elements from Saraf Omra to

Kabkabiyah, North Darfur. In response to the ensuing fighting, which resulted in the killing of 14 RSF, including one of their senior commanders, and nine militia, RSF arrested Musa Hilal, his three sons and members of his militia in his stronghold of Misteriya (30 km south-west of Kabkabiyah) and transported them to Khartoum. Given Hilal's profile as tribal leader of the Mahamid clan of the Northern Rizeigat, head of the Sudanese Revolutionary Awakening Council (SRAC) and former Janjaweed leader, the event has sent a strong message to other militia groups in Darfur.

13. The response of other tribal militias to RSF deployment and the weapons collection campaign in all the other Darfur states is observed as being muted. Incorporated into different auxiliary units of the Government forces, such as the border guards, Popular Defence Forces and Central Reserve Police, they have, in the main, complied with the campaign or joined RSF. As many of them were involved in the past in fighting against the rebel groups, the positive impact on security is widely appreciated by the local authorities and the tribal leaders. In this context, the weapons collection campaign has taken centre stage in all five Darfur states.

14. The weapons collection campaign has not only changed the balance of forces in Darfur's security environment by solidifying the position of RSF, it is also gradually creating the conditions for new political realities to take shape, amid mixed reactions from the local communities and communities of internally displaced persons. Set in motion by a presidential decree in early 2017, and initiated on 6 August by the Second Vice-President of the Sudan and chair of the High Committee for the Collection of Weapons, Hassabo Mohamed Abdul-Rahman, the Government's national plan on disarmament is underpinned by two pillars: tightening border control points with the neighbouring countries and undertaking the weapons collection in two phases, namely, a voluntary stage, followed by a "search and confiscate" (mandatory) phase. The campaign was launched simultaneously throughout five Darfur states and three Kordofan states, which in the Government's assessment have the highest level of proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Those in possession of weapons, ammunition, explosives or unregistered vehicles have been requested to hand them over to government security institutions, with immediate effect. Any resistance will be treated as a violation of the law and dealt with in accordance with the Sudan's criminal law, the Public Safety Act and the Arms, Ammunition and Explosives Act of 1986.

15. Although the conclusions of the national dialogue and the recommendations of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation process call for the implementation of a civilian disarmament campaign, the Darfur rebel movements and their former foes expressed strong opposition to the collection of weapons from the very beginning. Musa Hilal denounced the campaign while rejecting the incorporation of his border guards into RSF. SLA/MM and JEM/Gibril did the same within days, by calling for a comprehensive security sector reform and for putting the process on hold until a comprehensive peace agreement was reached. SLA/AW, welcoming the position of Hilal, offered to work with him in rejecting the process.

16. While there are no consolidated figures on its outcome, to date, no significant issues have been recorded during the weapons collection in West, Central, South and East Darfur states, which entered the second phase, mandatory collection, in the first half of November. The campaign is conducted by a joint force composed mainly of the national armed forces and RSF, assisted by Government of the Sudan police and the Central Reserve Police. The reported numbers of collected weapons vary between 3,200 during the voluntary phase in South Darfur, to about 4,700 in East Darfur, while expectations in West Darfur are to reach some 14,000 items. Overall, while the initiation of the campaign was received with mixed reactions and scepticism, the local authorities and tribal leaders consider that it has increased security among the

communities. UNAMID welcomed it as a positive step by the Government to consolidate the prevailing relative peace and stability in Darfur, while engaging the authorities on reported concerns over non-respect for the rule of law and violations of human rights associated with the conduct of the campaign. On 1 December, the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno commended the ongoing campaign in the Sudan as having boosted security in neighbouring Chad.

17. Some communities of internally displaced persons are apprehensive that the campaign might trigger a deterioration of their security conditions and have requested the mission to monitor the process. Although there have been reports of joint government forces entering the camps for internally displaced persons during the mandatory stage, such as in Kalma camp in South Darfur on 2 November, Hamidiya camp in Zalingei, Central Darfur, on 16 November, and Abu Zar camp in West Darfur on 20 November, the collection process went without incident in the last two camps and a UNAMID team observed the process. In Nyala, South Darfur, given the complex nature of the settlement, the Government requested that UNAMID undertake the weapons collections inside Kalma camp. Following two meetings held by the Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley Mamabolo, with the Second Vice-President of the Sudan and the Governor of South Darfur, on 9 and 14 November, an agreement was reached to establish a trilateral committee, with the participation of UNAMID, the Government and the representatives of internally displaced persons, to conduct the collection of weapons in the camp. On 22 November, the mission's team in South Darfur reached an agreement whereby the voluntary collection of weapons in Kalma camp would be undertaken under the supervision of state authorities and the leadership of internally displaced persons in Kalma, with UNAMID monitoring the process, which started on 10 December without incident.

Intercommunal conflicts

18. Intercommunal conflicts over land and natural resources remain one of the main sources of violence in Darfur, but since mid-2015, the number of such conflicts has continued to decrease significantly. There were three intercommunal clashes, resulting in 45 fatalities, for the period from 15 October to 15 December, compared to eight clashes, resulting in 19 fatalities, reported between 15 August and 15 October, and 10 clashes, with 74 fatalities, for the period from 6 June to 15 August 2017. The overall decline is attributed to the joint efforts of the state governments, Government armed forces and the Sudanese police forces at the local level, as well as UNAMID support for the mediation efforts and, more recently, to the weapons collection campaign, which has visibly limited access to small arms among civilians.

19. A number of conflicts persist, as the issues at their origin remain unaddressed in a sustainable manner. The conflict between the Zaghawa and the Rizeigat in West Darfur over cattle and camels flared up again between 16 and 19 October, resulting in the killing of 16 Zaghawa and 11 Rizeigat. It was brought under control with the intervention of the Sudan-Chad joint border forces and the state government with the assistance of UNAMID. Intercommunal tensions over natural resources in the areas of Buram and Graida, South Darfur, continue between the Salamat, Habbaniya and Fallata communities. On 20 July, armed Fallata killed five Salamat, 16 km south-west of Graida, while they were moving with their livestock towards Nyala. In East Darfur, the conflict between the Rizeigat and the Ma'aliya over land ownership and natural resources resulted in the death of 39 Rizeigat and 2 Ma'aliya, after a series of clashes between 21 and 24 July. The state government deployed security forces on 24 July and days later, Government armed forces disarmed and arrested several civilians and traditional leaders, which was followed by the dismissal of the native administration of both communities for their failure to contain the conflict. In North Darfur, tensions

between the Northern Rizeigat and Beni Hussein over the control of the Jebel Amir goldmines remain latent, as the grievances of the latter have not been addressed.

Conflict trends in the areas from which the mission has withdrawn

20. The security situation in the area of the Muhajiriyah team site, in East Darfur, has remained calm, mainly as a result of the measures taken by the Government security institutions, including the deployment of troops in the buffer zone to curb the protracted intercommunal clashes between the Southern Rizeigat and the Ma'aliya. The mediation efforts of native administrations, with the support of UNAMID, have also contributed to the reduction of tensions. From being a mobility corridor for the armed movements in the past, Muhajiriyah is currently under the tight control of Government forces. The deployment of Sudanese police in remote locations has contributed to a 40 per cent reduction in criminality in the state. East Darfur currently provides shelter to more than 80,000 South Sudanese refugees, who are assisted by humanitarian actors.

21. The areas around the Edd al-Fursan and Tulus team sites, in South Darfur, have not been prone to armed conflict or intercommunal violence, except for the seasonal clashes between the Fallata and the nomad communities during the migration/farming season. The Government has launched several reconciliation initiatives between the tribes in the area, including in Shataya, where the conflict started in 2003. The departure of the mission from those areas, however, poses challenges for the monitoring of cross-border activities along the borders with the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

22. No reports of belligerent activities or intercommunal clashes have been received from the areas around the Foro Burunga and Habila team sites, in West Darfur. While in the past, insecurity in those areas was related to the proliferation of small arms and criminal activities, the recent weapons collection campaign and the robust deployment of the Government forces have resulted in improved security. The joint Sudan-Chad patrols along the border have had a visible deterrent effect on criminal activities and the circulation of small weapons in the area.

23. The situation around the Al-Malihah, Mellit, Tine, Abu Shuk, Zamzam and Um Kaddadah team sites is relatively calm and there are currently no records of any armed conflict and/or intercommunal conflict-related incidents. The case involving the killing of an African Medob Central Reserve Police officer by a member of RSF on 28 August 2017 was described as an isolated incident, which was followed by the subsequent arrest of the perpetrator and mediation by the Government. Following the signing of a tripartite agreement between the governments of Chad and the Sudan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in May 2017, Sudanese refugees currently residing in Chad are expected to return to North, Central and West Darfur, starting in 2018. The deployment of Sudanese police in all 15 localities of North Darfur and the ongoing weapons collection campaign have reportedly decreased the levels of criminality. The borders with neighbouring countries are controlled by the Government armed forces and RSF, whose tasks include stopping illegal migration and smuggling.

B. Political developments

Darfur peace process

24. Progress towards achieving a negotiated political settlement to the conflict remains elusive. While the parties proclaim their intention to continue negotiations, preconditions, a lack of vision and further fragmentation of the movements mar any tangible outcomes. On 20 August, informal consultations with SLA/MM and

JEM/Gibril in Berlin on ways to revive the peace process resulted in both groups maintaining their rejection of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur as the basis for political negotiations, reiterating its shortcomings in relation to security arrangements, the protection of civilians, compensation, land ownership and justice. On 27 August, a breakaway faction of JEM, led by Abubakar Hamid and Souleyman Jamous, accepted the disarmament proposal made by the Government. On 13 October, the leadership council of one of the factions of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) elected Minni Minawi as its new chairman, during its general conference in Paris. On 16 October, it was reported that the Sudan Liberation Army led by Nour al-Din Zurg (SLA/Zurg) had suspended the peace agreement it signed with the Government in 2016, over accusations of slow implementation.

25. In Darfur, new cabinet posts were announced by state governors between 9 June and 16 July, in order to accommodate some signatories to the National Dialogue document. Preference in the distribution of posts in Darfur state parliaments and cabinets was given to the smaller movements and factions of the non-signatory movements as compared to traditional opposition parties. Those changes notwithstanding, the National Congress Party remains the dominant force in the political landscape and some of the signatory movements have openly expressed dissatisfaction with the implementation of agreements that they had signed and have threatened to withdraw their support.

Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur

26. There has been limited tangible progress since the letter dated 30 August 2017 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council on the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (S/2017/747). On 11 September, in a meeting with the head of the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office, Magdi Khalafalla, the President of the Sudan gave assurances regarding the speedy structuring and revitalization of the commissions tasked with implementing the provisions of the Doha Document. On 25 October, the Second Vice-President organized a follow-up meeting on the implementation of the Document, the status of the Darfur Commissions and the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund, and Government support to the Sudanese refugees who have returned from Chad to Darfur. According to Government sources, the staffing needs of the Commissions have recently been addressed, and the Commissioners have been appointed at the ministerial level, under the Presidency. The Darfur Fund has completed 650 of 1,070 projects, and the Government is approaching the donor community for additional funding.

27. The Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation continues to draw the support of most stakeholders in Darfur, as it aims to provide space for ordinary citizens to discuss an inclusive political process in Darfur. Although the non-signatory movements have not made any public pronouncements against the process, they have not yet publicly endorsed it. To date, consultations have been completed in all 68 localities in Darfur, with the support of UNAMID, and a review conference took place on 30 October to take stock of the process and share the outcomes. Preparations for Darfur state-level consultations with refugees and the diaspora are under way. Channels need to be identified for including the outcomes of the Consultation in the constitutional review process.

Impact of the lifting of sanctions by the United States of America

28. The revocation by the United States of America of economic sanctions against the Sudan and the Government of the Sudan as of 12 October created a new impetus and space for political engagement, in recognition of the Government's sustained positive actions towards maintaining a cessation of hostilities in conflict areas in the

Sudan and improving humanitarian access throughout the Sudan. Tangible economic dividends, however, may take time to materialize. The lifting of the sanctions has visibly improved the engagement of the state actors in Darfur with the international community, while generating a sense of optimism among the local communities. However, JEM/Gibril and SLA/MM were of the view that the lifting of sanctions should have been conditioned on tangible progress in the peace process. Sanctions relating to blocking the property of persons in connection with the conflict in Darfur have not been lifted and the Sudan remains on the United States list of State sponsors of terrorism. Those sanctions continue to have an impact on the ability of the Government of the Sudan to benefit from debt relief and other international development assistance.

III. Progress in implementing phase one

A. Peacebuilding

29. The Darfur state governments and UNAMID are working to achieve the peacebuilding component of the two-pronged approach, adopted by the Security Council in its resolution 2363 (2017). Nearly all the government officials whom the assessment team met requested development projects to support the fledgling peace in Darfur, even as they welcomed the closure of the mission's sites. To date, however, only the state governments of North and South Darfur have submitted their stabilization plans for support by UNAMID and the international community, while discussions are at an advanced stage in East Darfur State. In addition, the assessment team noticed that the activities of the Commissions of the Darfur Peace Follow-up Office (residual commissions of the former Darfur Regional Authority) at the state level were limited, owing to shortage of funding and staffing.

30. At the mission level, a framework of engagement with state authorities, based on national ownership and rooted in the Doha Document and the findings of the Dialogue and Consultation, was recently prepared in line with the mission's mandate, with specific attention to the immediate need to support the police and help to build the rule of law institutions, while continuing to protect civilians and mediate intercommunal conflict. The next steps include a dialogue to identify specific areas of intervention in each state in order to reach agreement with the Darfur state authorities. The mission needs to finalize the state-specific stabilization plans in cooperation with the country team and state authorities by 31 January 2018, which requires, at the same time, the strengthening of the mission's offices in the states of Darfur. A major challenge remains the financing of United Nations country team activities on peacebuilding in support of the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

31. With the objective of addressing medium to longer-term needs related to land tenure and land use in particular, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focuses on the implementation of the Darfur Development Strategy through 12 foundational activities and short-term activities projects co-implemented by United Nations entities in collaboration with line ministries.

B. Peacekeeping and the Jebel Marra task force

32. The peacekeeping aspect of the two-pronged approach is based on the establishment of the Jebel Marra task force, in line with paragraph 53 of the special report (S/2017/437), to include nine existing team sites and a temporary operating base to be established in Golo. The task force is to be established during phase one

and operationalized in phase two of the reconfiguration. UNAMID formalized the task force concept of operations on 7 December 2017, by defining its organizational and operational structure, with headquarters in Zalingei. As its area of operations will cover team sites in three Darfur states, a coordination mechanism has been established to facilitate political and military activities and liaise with respective state authorities.

33. UNAMID has not yet received official notification of permission to establish a temporary operating base in Golo, as requested in paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 2363 (2017). The mission sent a note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 July 2017, followed by a detailed concept of operations for the site, which was transmitted on 22 August 2017. The Joint Special Representative also raised the matter with the First Vice-President and Prime Minister of the Sudan, Bakri Hassan Salih, on 30 August 2017, and followed up with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 October. The issue was discussed during the African Union-United Nations-Government of the Sudan tripartite meeting held in New York on 22 September 2017. On 13 December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the mission that it had identified the land for the site and that an official communication on its allocation would follow.

C. Reconfiguration of the military component

34. The mission's military component currently stands at 11,461 personnel, (reduced from the previous level of 15,845) against an authorized strength of 11,395 at the end of phase one. This includes a rear party of 109 and 454 military staff officers and military experts on mission out of an authorized 520. As the reconfiguration process is still under way, the force is operating from five sectors, namely Sector North with two infantry battalions, Sector West with one infantry battalion, Sector Central, including the Jebel Marra task force, with four infantry battalions, Sector South with two infantry battalions and Sector East with one infantry battalion. In total, the force is operating from 24 team sites and two temporary operating bases. Ten military team sites have already been handed over to the respective state governments. It is foreseen that the area of operation will be converted into a two-sector set-up by the end of phase two, namely Sector 1 covering the Jebel Marra area and Sector 2 covering the rest of Darfur, with the mission's main effort remaining on its peacekeeping posture in the Jebel Marra Sector.

35. The implementation of phase one of the reconfiguration entailed the repatriation of three infantry battalions from Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Pakistan, along with a level II hospital from Mongolia, and the non-deployment of one infantry battalion each from Pakistan and the United Republic of Tanzania, which had previously been expected to deploy to the mission. This reduced the total number of infantry battalions to 11 from the 16 previously mandated, of which 14 were deployed. The reconfiguration process of the military component was completed by the end of October 2017.

36. The process was undertaken within a much shorter period than anticipated, which had a negative effect on the further planning and execution of the reconfiguration. The assessment team noted that some unplanned repatriations were executed, including that of the level II hospital, which also affected the morale of troops and affected operations within the mission. The issue of repatriation of enablers was also considered during the assessment, and it was concluded that owing to operational requirements, all current enablers, namely, aviation, medical and engineering enablers, should be retained, the latter in view of their continued requirement for development projects in both future sectors (heavy component with explosive ordnance disposal capability for the Jebel Marra task force and lighter component for stabilization tasks).

37. Kalma is one of the seven team sites that will be required to be handed over to formed police units during phase two. As a result of the disarmament campaign, the security situation in Kalma camp, a highly politicized stronghold of SLA/AW, has again deteriorated, after a couple of years of relative calm. As noted above, the Government approached UNAMID for support with the disarmament of the camp. It is therefore recommended that the handover of the site to the formed police units be completed towards the end of phase two of the reconfiguration, by which time the weapons collection campaign would have been completed.

D. Reconfiguration of the police component

38. The mission's police component currently stands at 2,666 United Nations police against an authorized strength of 2,888 at the end of phase one (reduced from the previous level of 3,403, which comprised 1,583 individual police officers and 13 formed police units). It consists of 1,118 individual police officers and 1,548 formed police unit elements deployed in mission headquarters and five sector headquarters, as well as at 24 team sites. In line with the reconfiguration plan, UNAMID police ceased operations at 11 team sites.

39. The repatriation of two formed police units from Bangladesh and Senegal was completed in September, at the end of their rotation cycle, while one formed police unit was redeployed from El Fasher to Umm Barru and another from Ed Daein to Shaeria to provide security to team sites vacated by the military component. There were concerns among UNAMID staff in the sectors about the capacity of the formed police units to fully take over from the departing military in some locations.

40. The Sudanese police have re-established its presence in all 11 locations where UNAMID has closed team sites. The security situation in the state capitals is currently assessed as being stable, owing to the increased presence of the Sudanese police, as well as the Government's operations against the rebel movements and its ongoing weapons collection campaign. Of note is the fact that the Sudanese police is also required to keep its firearms in armouries during the weapons collection campaign.

41. The operational activities of the police component, in particular patrolling, have decreased by an average of 25 to 30 per cent, and is currently at between 70 and 75 patrols per day, which also reflects the patrols conducted from the closed team sites. In order to allow for the future increased involvement of individual police officers in capacity-building activities and the involvement of formed police units in static security-related activities at the team sites, the mission is planning to merge some sectors in order to decrease the number of officers deployed in support functions, while redeploying them to patrolling in camps for internally displaced persons.

E. Closure of team sites

42. A total of 11 team sites were closed and handed over to the Government of the Sudan between 8 August and 20 October 2017, namely El Fasher/Zamzam, El Fasher/Abu Shuk, Al-Malihah, Um Kaddadah, Tine and Mellit (Sector North); Habila and Foro Burunga (Sector West); Edd al-Fursan and Tulus (Sector South); and Muhajiriyah (Sector East). The assessment team visited nine locations, including Golo. The state authorities confirmed that the sites will be used for public services and to the benefit of local communities, with Mellit, Um Kaddadah and Habila having been allocated to the College of Agriculture, while Al-Malihah and Tulus, which are currently used by the security forces, to be converted into a school and a local community centre. The assessment team witnessed that all but one of the team sites

(Um Kaddadah) are presently occupied by the joint forces for the weapons collection campaign.

43. The state governments cooperated in the smooth handover of the sites through establishing joint committees. While the state authorities have been supportive of the drawdown process, they have high expectations and have formulated additional demands towards the mission and the United Nations country team related to development activities, especially in the areas of health and education.

F. Civilian staffing review

44. The special report (S/2017/437) called for a civilian staffing review of UNAMID, which was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2363 (2017), with a view to ensuring that staffing levels are adjusted to implement the revised mandate. Given the magnitude of the change in the number of uniformed personnel and the revised substantive focus of the mission, the staffing review concentrated on commensurate reductions in civilian personnel and the alignment of structures to the mission mandate. A reduction of 558 positions has been included in the revised 2017/18 budget submission that is under consideration by the Fifth Committee, and a further reduction of 302 positions is being considered for the 2018/19 budget cycle.

45. The mission should find ways to address the needs of staff in the team sites, since most of the support services are already concentrated at the level of mission headquarters and the sector field offices, leaving the team sites dependent on short missions from technical experts to resolve maintenance and repair issues for critical services. Further staff reductions need to be implemented primarily at mission headquarters and then in the sector field offices. In addition, in view of the low percentage of women in the mission (29 per cent among staff in the international category, and 13 per cent among staff in the national category), the forthcoming comparative review process methodology and criteria should ensure that women encumbering positions in sections and/or units with low representation levels of women are not adversely affected through the streamlining exercise.

IV. Impact of the reconfiguration

46. The assessment in Darfur was undertaken within a few weeks of the closure of team sites, which only allowed for a preliminary analysis of the impact of UNAMID reconfiguration. While no serious adverse impact was noted during the field mission and during the subsequent weeks, it is clear that it is too early to make a definite determination of the impact of the closure of team sites on the population. The analysis below gives a general assessment of the situation, pointing to possible risks as they were conveyed to the assessment team.

A. Humanitarian and protection challenges

Communities of internally displaced persons and humanitarian assistance

47. While the security situation has visibly improved, the humanitarian indicators illustrate a continuing emergency situation, with 2.7 million people displaced, of whom 2.1 million are in need of assistance across Darfur, and more than half a million children face severe acute malnutrition. Approximately 1.6 million displaced people live in a range of camps and settlements in close proximity to urban or peri-urban centres, with many of them displaced since 2003 and, for multiple reasons, unable or unwilling to return to their places of origin. Approximately 533,000 persons have

returned voluntarily to their places of origin across the Sudan since 2003, and UNHCR began the repatriation of Sudanese refugees from the Central African Republic on 12 December. Nevertheless, the lack of security, basic services and sustainable livelihoods in return areas, as well as issues related to land ownership have become major impediments to return, as stressed in meetings the assessment team had with representatives of internally displaced persons.

48. Overall, no additional displacements have taken place during the period of the assessment in the vicinity of the closed team sites and their closure to date has not resulted in the slowdown of humanitarian or development programme delivery. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service has weekly flights to Golo and Rockero, the main challenge being the poor road conditions. The delivery of humanitarian and recovery projects/programming is continuing, without hindrance and without access challenges.

49. In the above context, the humanitarian community is facing two main challenges. The first concerns the large proportions of people affected by displacement and other vulnerable residents who are facing a situation where humanitarian assistance cannot meet their chronic and long-term needs, which remain largely unaddressed owing to limited investment in human resources and physical infrastructure. As part of a broader durable solutions strategy for Darfur, consideration needs to be given to a pragmatic, longer-term approach that provides assistance to those long-term displaced persons located in urban or peri-urban areas in Darfur. The second challenge relates to the depletion of natural resources in the context of desertification and continued population growth, paired with persistent pockets of insecurity and weak institutions, which are unable to change the status quo. The situation calls for appropriate interventions so as to break the cycle of poverty and instability and offer the population longer-term, pragmatic solutions.

Protective environment

50. The improvement in the overall security situation has not translated into a commensurate improvement in the situation of human rights, which is further exacerbated by the continued state of emergency. Violations and abuses such as sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions and the denial of free expression and association persist with impunity. There were 149 cases of human rights violations, involving 385 victims, documented between July and October 2017, compared to 168 cases, involving 343 victims, during the same period in 2016. In addition, 13 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence were verified between July and September 2017. Although, over the course of the assessment period, there was a fluctuation and, to a certain extent, a decrease in the number of human rights violations reported, the number of cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the form of rape and attempted rape is consistent. There has been, however, a gradual increase in the number of investigations initiated by the judicial institutions.

51. During the period between 15 June and 15 August, there were 94 cases of human rights violations, involving 204 victims, including 22 children, and 27 cases of rape; investigations were initiated in 14 cases. During the period between 15 August and 15 October there were 72 cases of human rights violations, involving 253 victims, including 16 children, and 27 cases of rape; investigations were initiated in 17 cases. Over the past two months, there were 56 cases of human rights violations and abuses, involving 123 victims, including 18 children, and seven cases of rape; investigations were initiated in 26 cases. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified 43 incidents of grave violations, involving 57 children, between July and September 2017, compared to 48 incidents in the first quarter and 33 incidents in the second quarter of 2017. In this context, police in West Darfur State have stepped up

investigations, leading to several arrests, and have given human rights teams access to prisons; in Central Darfur State, investigations began on a case of sexual and gender-based violence in September and the perpetrators were arrested; in North Darfur State, the Government deployed the military to protect civilians against militia groups and deployed prosecutors and judges to the Fato Barno area to facilitate land returns and the resolution of land ownership disputes; and in South Darfur State, with the support of UNAMID, the Government has re-established rule of law and security institutions in Shataya locality, creating a positive impact in terms of stabilization and an increase in the number of internally displaced persons returning to the area.

52. The closure of team sites across Darfur has created a gap in early warning mechanisms, and access of human rights teams to those locations and their capacity to verify human rights violations continue to be limited. This is expected to result in the underreporting of incidents. Capacity-building and work for the promotion of human rights is also affected by logistical constraints. UNAMID is looking into alternative ways to address these issues, including the creation of mobile teams to operate through several sectors. There has been no progress in the negotiations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with the Government of the Sudan on a possible technical cooperation programme. In the meantime, the mission has finalized plans for the conduct of night patrols in the 47 camps for internally displaced persons, which were identified as a protection priority during the mapping of settlements of internally displaced persons in Darfur. It is crucial, however, to enhance the capacity of the state authorities and other local actors to effectively carry out the functions relating to the protection of civilians, especially internally displaced persons, and the promotion of human rights.

Challenges to the rule of law

53. Across Darfur, the presence and capacity of justice and corrections institutions remains limited. While the Government's efforts to restore the presence of the criminal justice chain, through the deployment of judges, prosecutors and police personnel, are to be commended, rural areas are severely affected by the absence of institutions. In the above context, while it is observed that so far, the drawdown of UNAMID from several team sites has had no adverse impact on the functioning of the judicial and prison institutions, its impact is mostly evident in the area of implementation and monitoring of rule of law projects, advisory support to prison institutions in Mellit and Um Kaddadah, legal aid services and the provision of logistical support to national counterparts. In the absence of reliable UNAMID air transportation, access by land for mission staff remains challenging, owing to the mission's security posture and restrictions by government security institutions.

54. The joint programme for the rule of law and human rights in Darfur of UNAMID, the United Nations country team and the Government of the Sudan is funded at only 14 per cent of requirements, despite the recent contribution by the Government of Canada of $961,391, in addition to initial funding at a similar level provided by UNAMID and UNDP. The mission's footprint in Darfur and its logistical support are important to the success of the programme in remote areas of the region. The mobilization of additional resources to increase the country team's capacity in Darfur remains critical for creating the necessary impact of the programme on the ground.

B. Capacities of the United Nations country team

55. As indicated in the special report (S/2017/437), the United Nations country team continues to face the same financial and staffing resource challenges in Darfur. The humanitarian needs are currently funded at 45 per cent for 2017, whereas

development activities are funded at a much lower level. Most members of the country team were of the view that it was too early to draw a conclusion regarding the impact of UNAMID drawdown and reconfiguration on its ability to assume a larger role in Darfur. They proposed the finalization of a system-wide Darfur fundraising strategy as an immediate measure to address funding gaps for development programmes. From the security perspective, country team members are adopting alternative solutions to UNAMID escorts, by calling upon the Sudanese police, mainly in areas not affected by conflict, outside the Jebel Marra region.

V. Cooperation of the Government of the Sudan

56. During phase one of the drawdown and reconfiguration of UNAMID, the Government of the Sudan has been very cooperative in facilitating the repatriation of contingents and the timely closure and hand-over of the team sites. To this end, committees were established at the state level to coordinate the work of the relevant government agencies and engage with UNAMID and the concerned parties in the process of handover of assets. While expressing appreciation for the work of UNAMID in fostering security over the years, several local officials and tribal leaders requested more development-oriented projects. In the same context, they were of the view that a number of assets, in particular generators, should have been donated to the communities.

57. The operating environment for the movement of humanitarian personnel across Darfur has been reliable and open since the revised directives and procedures for humanitarian action were outlined by the Humanitarian Aid Commission in December 2016. Humanitarian actors have scaled up operations in Golo and surrounding areas since July 2016, by providing health, education, water, nutrition, food security and protection assistance, with the participation of an increased number of non-governmental organization partners. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service has weekly flights to Golo and Rockero in Central Darfur State, as well as to Sortony, Tawilah, Shangil Tobaya and Kabkabiyah in North Darfur. In South Darfur's eastern Jebel Marra, areas of Menawashei, Belle el-Sereif and Layba are easily accessible by road, as is Kass locality.

58. However, on four occasions, UNAMID patrols were not allowed to visit areas from which the mission had withdrawn during phase one. Most recently, they were twice denied access for security reasons, before being allowed to proceed on 6 December to Misteriya, the location of clashes between RSF and armed elements affiliated to Musa Hilal.

Bureaucratic hindrances

59. Despite improvements in the request-issuance ratio, the mission continues to experience some difficulties in obtaining visas for international staff. During phase one of the reconfiguration, the Government granted 1,466 visas for UNAMID, which constituted 84 per cent of the requests. Those visas included 875 for military and police personnel and 43 for international staff. The non-issuance of visas affects the Human Rights Section of UNAMID in particular, where the vacancy rate remains at 44 per cent. A total of 42 visa requests for United Nations police remain pending with the authorities, leading to an increased vacancy rate that is slowly affecting the mission's ability to undertake stabilization efforts.

60. While the Government is progressively releasing food ration containers from Port Sudan, the release of 50 shipments of United Nations-owned equipment and contingent-owned equipment remains pending between customs and the Ministry of Finance, two of which have been pending since 2015.

VI. Conclusions

A. Assessment of conditions for implementing phase two

61. While it is still early to reach conclusions on the full impact of the reduction and reconfiguration in areas where UNAMID team sites have closed, it is important to note that no adverse effects have been reported so far. Security, as reported by all our interlocutors, has significantly improved, and the constitution of security committees by the five state governors, with membership from across all security services, has instituted effective coordination to ensure unity of purpose. In addition, the weapons collection campaign is overall a positive development that should also reduce the level of armed violence, if pursued to its logical conclusion. The campaign should also contribute to the improvement of the conditions necessary for the return of internally displaced persons to their original homes. The campaign will need to be carefully undertaken in Kalma camp, pursuing the plan agreed by the trilateral committee between the state government, internally displaced persons and UNAMID.

B. Adjustments arising from issues emerging during phase one

62. Owing to the security situation in Kalma camp for internally displaced persons and the resulting operational requirements, some adjustments in the reconfiguration plan for phase two will be made to enable continued military coverage for Kalma camp until the end of phase two. This would allow the formed police units to take full control gradually, once conditions improve.

63. The redeployment of formed police units in phase two, from military to police/civilian-only team sites, will require enhanced synchronization with the repositioning of the military component of UNAMID, as well as coordination with communities, government and other actors working in settings with formed police units, so that their expectations are managed. Furthermore, in view of the reduction in the number of individual police officers from mission and Sector headquarters, the assessment team supports the merger for administrative purposes of Sector West with Sector Centre, and Sector South with Sector East, while giving careful consideration to the critical elements of command, control, coordination and communication structures.

64. As the mission moves into phase two, there should be better coordination between the mission headquarters in El Fasher and the Sectors, as well as proper guidance to the state offices on the changing nature of the mission and the required new thinking and approach. Insufficient coordination and guidance on the operationalization of the two-pronged approach and the scope of stabilization was evident in the Sectors and is a cause for concern with regard to the implementation of the mission's mandate.

65. As phase two proceeds, therefore, a greater focus must be placed on mandate delivery in the current environment.

66. In line with paragraph 71 of the special report (S/2017/437), the mission should step up the implementation of a new security posture. The mission's development of an accessibility risk matrix is commendable but the review process should be more comprehensive, to include all areas where security has improved, and more inclusive, by taking into account the views and the needs of the United Nations country team and humanitarian actors. The mission should also review the size of UNAMID camps and compounds so as to ensure adequate security with reduced uniformed components.

C. Way forward

67. Provided that the current trends continue and contingent on considerations by the Security Council of further reductions in uniformed personnel, it is recommended that a review take place before the renewal of the mission's mandate in June 2018, in order to consider a new mission concept with adjusted priorities. As it stands, at the end of phase two, the mission would have reached its limits in the delivery of its priorities in its current geographic scope.

D. Fundraising for the United Nations country team

68. UNAMID and the United Nations country team are in the process of developing a joint fundraising strategy for the implementation of the Integrated Strategic Framework (2017-2019) that identified common priorities for sustainable peace in Darfur. The strategy aims to scale up country team resources for peace consolidation in the next two years, for a phased transition in Darfur, and will also include outreach to non-conventional donors, engagement with international and regional financial institutions and a wider scope of financial resources. Funding for the consolidation of peacebuilding efforts in Darfur should be treated as a political issue of high priority by Member States in order to protect the investments in peace and to avoid a relapse into conflict.